

Ancillary Materials File

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Deborah Zafman, Ph.D. earned her doctorate in the History of Art at UC Berkeley and has since had many incarnations within the international art world: art historian, critic, curator, gallerist and most recently, art advisor and fine art appraiser. She also recently began writing for Christie's and teaching contemporary art history out of her private home gallery. Deborah studied and lived abroad in Jerusalem, Florence, Berlin and Paris and is fluent in six languages. She joined Bnai Keshet's Chevra Kadisha in 2012 and is currently co-chair. Deborah has a penchant for estate appraisals because they provide opportunities to learn to practice compassionate listening for clients who are grieving recent losses. Also, in the case of estate planning, there are great opportunities to expand death awareness with her clients and offer them ways to conceive of their legacy. One of Deborah's deepest aspirations is to eventually do chaplaincy training and she envisions some day incorporating sacred chant into chaplaincy work.

i. Publications:

A dvar given on March 8, 2014 for Zayin Adar is on Bnai Keshet's website:

http://www.bnaikeshet.org/ck_furtherreading?post_id=61929

PHOTO

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A. Project completed: December 31,2015

B.

Forum: Tuesday, May 13, 2014 18:35

The REALLY BIG project is the creation of a "Jewish Book of the Dead". But given that this is a decades-long if not lifelong endeavor, I am starting with one small step toward that end. And this first small step constitutes the project for this course period.

I shall prepare a course that teaches chants appropriate for shiva and shmira. The larger context into which this course shall be situated is the creation of a 'Sacred Chant Circle' (SCC) comprised of members of our chevrah kadisha and prospective members. The ultimate goal of the SCC is for members to be "on call" to comfort and reassure those ill, dying, deceased, or grieving during any of the following occasions: illness, deathbed, taharah, shmira, burial and shiva. I will first focus only on chants for shiva and shmira initially. A careful selection of chants appropriate for shiva and shmira will be the initial subject of research in order to develop a repertoire of nine chants for each occasion. Other educational materials such as texts, poems, and anecdotes would be incorporated into the chant sessions in order to accentuate and highlight the meaning of the chants and to expand death awareness.

ELEVATOR SPEECH:

A Sacred Chant Circle has been created. Learn sacred chants and be "on call" to chant for those going through continuum of life events - illness, deathbed, taharah, shmira, burial and shiva - help comfort and heal those ill and/or dying, recently-departed souls, and those grieving loss. Make this option known to those in the community.

ABSTRACT:

The larger context into which this course shall be situated is the creation of a 'Sacred Chant Circle' (SCC), comprised of members of our Chevrah Kadisha

and prospective members. The ultimate goal of the SCC is to be “on call” to comfort and reassure through chanting, those ill, dying, deceased or grieving during any of the following occasions: illness, deathbed, taharah, shmira, burial, and shiva.

This project outlines the creation a first step: a training course that teaches a repertoire of chants appropriate for shmira and shiva since these are both occasions that serve as ideal entryways (accessibility) into participation in a Chevrah Kadisha. A careful selection of chants appropriate for shiva and shmira will be the initial subject of research in order to develop a repertoire of chants for each occasion. Other educational materials such as texts, poems and anecdotes would also be incorporated into the chant sessions in order to accentuate the meaning of the chants and to expand death awareness.

MARKETING BLURB

Join our Sacred Chant Circle now. Learn the art of accompanying the soul with the sacred sounds of the human voice as the soul transitions.

WORKING TITLE:

Sacred Chant Circle- chanting to escort, heal, and soothe souls moving through the continuum of life spectrum

C. A ‘sexy’ or ‘interesting’ title for the same project

Chants Encounter

Chantsitions

D. The type of project:

Training, Organizing, and Education

In order to establish a well-operating Sacred Chant Circle, training is the most important component. Once a repertoire of chants has been selected for each ‘occasion’, regular practice to learn each chant would be necessary. Another dimension not yet fully pursued would be to train or educate around the cultivation of Kavanah and, for lack of a better term “bedside manner”

so that chanters would learn how to develop the right degree of loving kindness to serve those that are ill, dying or grieving (and to feel comfortable in the presence of someone on his/her deathbed or in the presence of a met or metah). This would likely be akin to hospice volunteer training or even chaplaincy training.

Once a training program has been developed and enough members have joined the Sacred Chant Circle, then communicating about the SCC to those who might benefit from chanting and recruiting newer participants would be the next priority in addition to providing an ongoing training and practicing program to learn more chants as well as recruit and teach new volunteers chants for the first time. Training could take place in the form of a half-day workshop offered quarterly, recordings of chants should be placed on the website so members can have access to the chants for practice and bi-monthly chant practice should be offered (for example, 2nd and 4th Sundays, 4-5pm).

E. The target audience:

Chevra Kadisha members and any other willing congregants or members of the community. All genders and ages welcome.

F. Your ABCD write up

- A Audience
- B Behavior
- C Condition
- D Degree

AUDIENCE:

The audience will be comprised of already-existing chevrah kadisha members as well as other congregants who may be prospective CK members. Everyone is welcome, men and women alike, children too. Non-members may also attend. The course would be designed for congregants wishing to participate in the Chevrah Kadisha but who may not (yet) feel comfortable performing Taharah.

No prior experience in chanting (or singing) is required and congregants should not feel concerned about whether or not they have a

"good" voice. The only requirement is a sincere desire to offer comfort and to be a healing presence to those ill, dying, deceased and grieving.

There would be three levels of audience to identify:

- (i) Participants who would show up to chant if they happen to be available.
- (ii) Participants who would commit to being on call and would intentionally show up.
- (iii) Future leaders of chants at shiva and shmirah.

BEHAVIOR:

To learn chants and be able to chant with a sense of their meaning during shiva and shmirah. To develop a strong sensitivity to the needs of the deceased and bereaved in order to be able to offer comfort and be a healing and helpful presence. Proper kavanah and "bedside manner" would be crucial behaviors to cultivate.

CONDITION:

To learn eight chants for shiva and shmirah in order to chant them in the face of those grieving and mourning (shiva) and in the presence of a neshama that has recently left the body (shmirah).

DEGREE:

To have learned the chants by heart so as to lead others to chant as well who might be present and to chant with a deep sense of the chants' meaning and to transmit the proper Kavanah to others. Ideally, to chant in order to allow the presence of Shechinah to shine.

G.

PROJECT PLAN AND TIMELINE

May 21, 2014: organizational planning meeting held to outline next steps:

1. Begin with selection of eight chants for shiva that would be the most "universal" and therefore applicable for other occasions (particularly shmira and perhaps also burial). Initial goal is to comfort and bring peace both to grievors and neshama with the understanding that chanting during shmira, burial, and shiva do not require hospice-type training for how to behave around someone ill or on their deathbed and that these chants can benefit both those living and deceased. Concerning taharah, it remains questionable whether chanters could/should be present in room with those performing taharah. A possible solution: create a recording of "taharah" chants specifically for taharah that could be played in the taharah room (would this be acceptable? Perhaps liturgy/prayers could also be recorded along with chants). An alternative possibility – opposite of recording idea: teach chants and liturgy to those performing taharah and determine whether it is conceivable that one could attend to performing Taharah while chanting.
2. Four founding members of sacred chant circle to practice these eight chants individually for a month.
3. Late June 2014: Meet to "rehearse" the shiva/shmira chants prior to recording.
4. Record chants with 4-5 chanters at professional recording studio (at MSU broadcasting dept.) July 2014. This recording will serve as training material to be distributed at fall workshop
5. Meanwhile this summer: get date on the calendar for first intensive workshop to be held as early in the fall as possible (before high holidays)
6. Need to determine form and content of workshop announcement (hard copy flyer, email blast, target to specific people), when and how often - therefore need title decided and good communication material for long term
7. Hold first workshop (4 hours on a Sunday either September 7th, 14th or 21st: 1-5pm) in order to teach the chants to those registered.
8. In addition to chants, some texts and discussion will be included as well - general death awareness teaching and specific study of the meaning of the chants

9. Continue with regular 2nd and 4th Sunday chant circle for practice/pleasure.
10. Plan additional workshops each trimester for other continuum of life events.

ORIGINAL FULL PROJECT CONCEPT:

My project would be situated far on the scholarly/esoteric end of the spectrum and any practical application may be decades away.

I would like to thoughtfully put together a 21st century "Jewish Book of the Dead" which incorporates the oldest traditions and re-envision them for present day Jews who want to experience a lucid and truly sacred death.

There are various threads running through my mind and everything is still embryonic and it remains to be seen whether or not the threads will weave themselves together.

I: Looking back - a survey of the literature:

Get a bird's eye view grasp of the "landscape" of all the existing scholarship/literature out there on death including deathbed liturgy, taharah manuals, including which specific psalms are best sung during shmirah.

Is there a good bibliography already out there?

The texts I'm currently interested in exploring are: Tehilim, Zohar and Ma'avar Yabbok

II: Sacred chant repertoire

Develop a series of chants appropriate to each occasion – death bed, taharah, shmirah, burial, and shiva. This is currently being done with the sacred chant circle that was recently initiated

III: Comparative work with 49 days of Bardo and 49 days of Omer counting (based on sets of seven)

We begin counting the omer on the first day of freedom out of egypt...but it is initial freedom so that we may be able to connect/unite with God (Shavuot). We pass a 49-day soul journey in preparation for the receiving the Torah (Shavuot) - union with god.

In the Tibetan Book of the Dead, bardo is a 49-day soul journey beginning at the body's death in this world and it's the transition period as the soul moves from this world into luminosity.

This makes me wonder if there have already been things written about how the 49-day bardo journey in the invisible world is reflected on the physical plane, mirrored in this world in the 49-day omer-counting to shavuot.

Resources:

I would like to work with Simcha Raphael and Mitch Chefitz but haven't asked them yet.

I would like to take a weekly Zohar class.